

**Reuters:**

## **Italy launches Milan-Bologna high-speed train link**

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MILAN (Reuters) - Italy launched a high-speed train link between the northern cities of Milan and Bologna on Saturday, part of a planned expansion to reach Rome next year and woo passengers away from airlines.

The fast train will cut travel time between the two cities to 65 minutes, state railway company unit Trenitalia said. Other trains take about twice as long on average to cover the 210-km (130-mile) stretch.

"The train has become a transport solution for everyone and throws out a challenge to the airplane," Trenitalia said in a statement.

Regular high-speed service from Milan to Bologna will start Sunday. Italy has three other fast train routes.

The high-speed service is scheduled to reach Rome next year and cut travel time between Milan, Italy's financial center, and the capital to three-and-a-half hours non-stop.

The state railway company, Ferrovie dello Stato, aims to corner 60 percent of the market for travel by any method over the route over the next two years, Chief Executive Mauro Moretti said.

The quicker train service has started as a group of Italian businessmen embark on an ambitious project to relaunch bankrupt national airline Alitalia SpA. Alitalia's main attraction is its dominance of the Rome-Milan air route. (Reporting by Ian Simpson; Editing by Angus MacSwan)